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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ROME 005360

SIPDIS

FROM U.S. MISSION IN ROME

STATE FOR A/S PRM DEWEY, A/S AFR KANSTEINER, IO ACTING A/S
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WOOD, NEA/ENA

USAID FOR ADMINISTRATOR NATSIOS, AA/DCHA WINTER, DCHA/FFP

USDA/FAS FOR U/S PENN, RTILSWORTH AND LREICH

NSC FOR JWDORKEN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAID](#) [AORC](#) [PREF](#) [EAGR](#) [AORC](#) [PREF](#) [EAGR](#) [EU](#) [WFP](#) [UN](#) [EU](#) [EAID](#) [WFP](#) [UN](#)

SUBJECT: WESTERN SAHARAN REFUGEES IMPERILED BY LACK OF FOOD
AID - BRIEFING BY AMBASSADOR WILLIAM SWING, SPECIAL
REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UN SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR MINURSO

REF: (A) ROME 5324, (B) ROME 5308

SUMMARY

1. AMBASSADOR WILLIAM SWING, SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UN SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR MINURSO (UN MISSION FOR THE REFERENDUM IN WESTERN SAHARA) ADDRESSED WFP'S DONORS ON OCTOBER 25. HE UNDERLINED THAT THE LACK OF FOOD AID AND INSUFFICIENT FUNDING PRESENTLY THREATEN SOME 155,000 WESTERN SAHARAN (SAHRAOUI) REFUGEES LIVING IN FOUR ISOLATED QUARTER-CENTURY OLD CAMPS IN THE INHOSPITABLE TINDOUF REGION, SOME 2,000 KILOMETERS SOUTH OF ALGERIA'S MEDITERRANEAN COAST. THESE REFUGEES HAVE FEW OTHER SOURCES OF FOOD AND OPPORTUNITIES TO EARN AN INCOME ARE SCARCE. WFP'S FOOD PIPELINE IS EXPECTED TO BREAK IN FEBRUARY 2003, WHEN ONLY 31 PERCENT OF THE FOOD BASKET WILL BE AVAILABLE, WHICH WOULD PROVIDE THE REFUGEES WITH ONLY 650 KILO-CALORIES/DAY. AMBASSADOR SWING HIGHLIGHTED THAT FOOD SECURITY IS VITAL TO
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MOVING THE POLITICAL PROCESS FORWARD AS IT DEMONSTRATES TO THE RESPECTIVE PARTIES THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY'S UNWAVERING COMMITMENT TO A PERMANENT POLITICAL SOLUTION. END SUMMARY.

BACKGROUND

2. AMBASSADOR WILLIAM L. SWING, SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UN SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR MINURSO ADDRESSED DONORS ON OCTOBER 25 AT WFP HEADQUARTERS. HE DESCRIBED A DRAMATIC SITUATION WHERE SOME 155,000 REFUGEES FROM WESTERN SAHARA, LIVING IN FOUR ISOLATED QUARTER-CENTURY OLD CAMPS IN THE INHOSPITABLE TINDOUF REGION, RELY HEAVILY ON WFP FOOD ASSISTANCE. THEY HAVE ACCESS TO FEW OTHER SOURCES OF FOOD. THESE CAMPS ARE IN EXCEEDINGLY ARID ZONES WHERE LITTLE FLOURISHES AND OPPORTUNITIES TO EARN AN INCOME ARE SCARCE. THE STALLED UN-SPONSORED SETTLEMENT PLAN HAS QUASHED HOPES FOR A SPEEDY RESOLUTION OF THEIR FLIGHT.

3. AMBASSADOR SWING COMMENTED THAT ERRATIC FOOD DELIVERIES AND INCOMPLETE FOOD BASKETS HAVE DRAMATIC EFFECTS ON THE NUTRITIONAL STATUS OF VULNERABLE BENEFICIARIES, PARTICULARLY PREGNANT AND NURSING WOMEN. CALORIC INTAKE AMONG BENEFICIARIES DROPS AS LOW AS 1,288 KILOCALORIES WHEN RESOURCES ARE INSUFFICIENT - SUCH AS OCCURRED IN JANUARY 2002. NOTE: A JOINT WFP/UNHCR NUTRITIONAL SURVEY IS BEING CONDUCTED TO DOCUMENT LEVELS OF MALNUTRITION AND VITAMIN DEFICIENCIES AMONG THE REFUGEE POPULATION. THE SURVEY REPORT IS EXPECTED TO BE RELEASED IN DECEMBER 2002. END NOTE.
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4. IT WAS ALSO POINTED OUT THAT WFP HAS SPONSORED DONORS' VISITS TO THE TINDOUF CAMPS, IN FEBRUARY 2001 AND AGAIN IN APRIL 2002, WITH A TOTAL PARTICIPATION OF EIGHTEEN EMBASSIES AND THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY'S HUMANITARIAN OFFICE (ECHO). AND WFP RECENTLY OPENED A SUB-OFFICE IN TINDOUF. NOTE: THE UNITED STATES HAS SUPPORTED A STEPPED-UP UNHCR/WFP PRESENCE IN TINDOUF, INCLUDING POST-DISTRIBUTION MONITORING TO ENSURE THAT WFP FOOD AID REMAINS WITH THE REFUGEES AND IS USED STRICTLY FOR HUMANITARIAN PURPOSES. AN ENHANCED UN PRESENCE WILL ALSO FURNISH THE REFUGEE POPULATIONS WITH A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR RIGHTS AND THEIR OPTIONS FOR DURABLE SOLUTIONS. END NOTE.

5. IN ADDITION TO UNHCR AND WFP, THERE ARE SOME 19 NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (NGOS) - TWO ALGERIAN, 16

EUROPEAN AND ONE FROM THE UNITED STATES - OPERATING
COMPLEMENTARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS IN THE CAMPS.

16. A JOINT WFP/UNHCR APPEAL WAS ISSUED IN GENEVA ON AUGUST
28 TO FURTHER ALERT THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO THE
HUMANITARIAN NEEDS OF THE REFUGEES AND TO SENSITIZE DONORS
TO THE LOOMING FOOD CRISIS IN THE COMING MONTHS. NOTE: ONLY
ONE DONATION (FROM ITALY), AMOUNTING TO 2,322 MT, HAS BEEN

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ACTION IO-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AF-00	AID-00	AMAD-00	CIAE-00	COME-00
	CTME-00	INL-00	WHA-00	SRPP-00	EAP-00	EB-00	EUR-00
	E-00	UTED-00	VC-00	TEDE-00	INR-00	VCE-00	M-00
	NEA-00	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OES-01	OIC-02	OMB-01	PER-00
	IRM-00	STR-00	TEST-00	TRSE-00	USIE-00	EPAE-00	ECA-00
	PRM-00	SAS-00	/004W				

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P 311527Z OCT 02
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6719
USDA WASHDC PRIORITY
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
USEU BRUSSELS 2910
USMISSION GENEVA
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

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MADE TO DATE. END NOTE.

17. APPROXIMATELY 12,200 METRIC TONS ARE REQUIRED TO MEET THE
REFUGEES' FOOD NEEDS BETWEEN NOW AND JUNE 2003. MONTHLY
REQUIREMENTS ARE ABOUT 2,800 METRIC TONS (TO PROVIDE 2,144
KILOCALORIES PER PERSON PER DAY). THIS COSTS USD 1.25
MILLION/MONTH. NOTE: THE TWO-YEAR WFP PROTRACTED RELIEF AND
RECOVERY OPERATION (PRRO) IS VALUED AT USD 29.7 MILLION
COVERING THE PERIOD SEPTEMBER 1, 2002 - AUGUST 31, 2004.
ECHO IS ALSO PROVIDING APPROXIMATELY USD 14 MILLION OVER A
15-MONTH PERIOD IN NON-FOOD AND MICRO-PROJECT SUPPORT. END
NOTE.

18. GIVEN LACK OF PLEDGES, THE FOOD PIPELINE IS EXPECTED TO
BREAK IN FEBRUARY 2003. THE CEREALS SHORTFALL IS EXPECTED TO
STAND AT 73 PERCENT; SUPPLIES OF OIL, SUGAR AND SALT WILL BE
COMPLETELY EXHAUSTED. IN TOTAL, ONLY 31 PERCENT OF THE FOOD
BASKET WILL BE AVAILABLE, WHICH WILL PROVIDE THE REFUGEES
WITH ONLY 650 KCALS/DAY. CONFIRMATION OF CONTRIBUTIONS NOW
WOULD ENABLE THE WFP COUNTRY OFFICE TO BORROW FROM BUFFER
STOCKS IN THE COUNTRY TO AVOID A COMPLETE BREAKDOWN OF THE
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PIPELINE. IMMEDIATE AID (DECEMBER-MARCH), PREFERABLY IN
CASH, WHICH WOULD PERMIT PURCHASES IN THE REGION, IS
REQUIRED.

COMMENT

19. AMBASSADOR BILL SWING HAS HAD A LONG AND DISTINGUISHED
FOREIGN SERVICE CAREER AND IS UNDOUBTEDLY ONE OF OUR HANDFUL
OF "WISE MEN" ON AFRICA. HE CLEARLY VIEWS A SUFFICIENTLY
SUBSCRIBED AND PREDICTABLE SUPPLY OF WFP FOOD AID AS A VITAL
ELEMENT IN MOVING THE POLITICAL PROCESS FORWARD - AS IT
DEMONSTRATES TO THE RESPECTIVE PARTIES THE INTERNATIONAL

COMMUNITY'S UNWAVERING COMMITMENT TO A PERMANENT POLITICAL SOLUTION. IN THIS REGARD HE NOTED THAT SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1429 (JULY 30, 2002) CALLED INTER ALIA FOR SUPPORT TO WFP'S FOOD EFFORTS. HE URGED SOME PROMINENT EX-DONORS (BELGIUM AND JAPAN) TO RE-JOIN THE FOOD AID EFFORT. HE UNDERLINED THAT FOOD SHORTAGES ACT AS A DE-STABILIZING FACTOR IN THE REFUGEE CAMPS AND IMPEDE CONFIDENCE BUILDING MEASURES WITH THE CONCERNED PARTIES, BY LIMITING UN LEVERAGE.

18. USMISSION STRONGLY SUPPORTS AMBASSADOR SWING'S APPEAL FOR ENHANCED ASSISTANCE TO WFP'S ALGERIA PRRO. HALL

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